

ELKHORN WINTER YURT GUIDE

The Elkhorn yurt is conveniently located off the Elkhorn Loop trail for use by Nordic skiers and snowshoers. This yurt is the most remote of all the department yurts. You have direct access to over 27 miles of groomed and 50 miles of marked ski trails. The 270° view to the east, south and west is spectacular, especially in the evening. From the yurt you can see Jackson Peak, Wolf Mountain, Steele Mountain, the Trinity range, Sunset Peak, and Pilot Peak. The open, rolling terrain below the yurt provides off-trail skiers a chance to polish their skills. The nearby-ungroomed Cougar trail provides access to a prime intermediate/advanced telemark area. This secluded telemark area is approximately .5 miles away and has 500 feet slopes facing all directions. Snow is usually available for skiing from December 1 to April 15.

Reservation:

Reservations for stays within IDPR Idaho City Backcountry Yurts can be online at www.parksandrecreation.idaho.gov or toll free 1-866-634-3246. Reservations are accepted 9-months in advance of your intended stay and no later than 48-hours prior to your intended arrival. A non-refundable fee of \$6 is assessed at the time your reservation is made. All fees must be paid in advance of your stay.

Yurts are reserved from 2 p.m. the day of your reservation until 1 p.m. the following afternoon. The maximum length of stay in the same yurt is 5 days.

Difficulty:

Intermediate to advanced. The difficulty of touring trails can increase in poor snow conditions and weather. The beginning of the route to Elkhorn yurt includes a long steep section and may require you to remove your skis and walk up. Later on, skiers can expect short, steep sections of trail that you will have to herringbone up. Climbing skins are recommended for those with heavy packs. Individuals should be thoroughly prepared and travel with someone who has been to the yurt and can readily find it. The Elkhorn Loop trail is generally groomed on Thursday or Friday from December 1 to March 15. You should not count on the trail being groomed, but a freshly groomed trail will substantially reduce the amount of energy necessary to get to the yurt.

Where to Park:

The Banner Ridge Park N' Ski parking lot is about 23.5 miles north of Idaho City on Highway 21. An Idaho Park N' Ski permit is required to park here Nov 15th to Apr 30th. Please park your vehicles close together on the high end of the parking lot next to the highway. You should also carry a shovel because you might have to dig your car out in case of heavy snow. Do not park on Highway 21.

How to Get to the Yurt:

The trails are marked with blue or yellow diamond shapes, called blazes, attached to trees. The recommended approach to the yurt is to take the Elkhorn

Loop trail clockwise to the yurt turnoff point. At the first intersection of the Elkhorn Loop trail, just .2 miles from the parking lot, continue straight up the Elkhorn Loop trail. This will take you past the Banner trail intersection and up onto the scenic Banner Ridge. Stay on the blue blazed Elkhorn Loop until you get back into the trees. At 2.0 miles you will come to the Cougar trail intersection and you will see a large "Bear Crossing" sign. This is a turn off for the Banner Ridge yurt. Continue on the Elkhorn Loop trail. After about a ½ mile you will pass through an aspen grove. At about 3.1 miles, you will be at the second Cougar trail intersection and at the base of a short steep climb. Stay on the Elkhorn Loop trail and climb to the top of this small ridge. At this point, you should see a 4x4 wood post with yellow blazes and a large "Cougar Crossing" sign on it. Turn left and follow the yellow blazes generally south and east for 100 yards. Near the high point in this area, you will find the Elkhorn yurt. If you arrive at the Alpine/Elkhorn trail intersection, you have gone past the yurt turnoff. You cannot see the Elkhorn yurt from the trail.

Elevation Gain and Distance:

About 660 feet rise over 3.0 miles (one-way). There are many steep sections. You will climb and descend several times on your way to the yurt

Water:

The nearest creek water is about 1/3 mile away and is not easily accessible in the winter. Your best bet for water is to use the large pots provided to melt snow on the wood stove. We recommend boiling the water for 10 minutes before using.

Wood Pile:

Wood for the stove is located under the yurt deck. You may have to dig your way to the woodpile.

Special Equipment Needed:

Several members of the party should carry portable snow shovels.

Avalanche and Whiteout Hazard:

Chances of an avalanche are low as long as the Elkhorn Loop trail is used. Avalanches can occur on nearby slopes. We do not recommend you travel to the yurt in high wind, heavy snow conditions, or at night because the trail section on the Banner Ridge, which is a high, treeless, exposed ridge, can quickly develop whiteout conditions.

Maps Needed:

Idaho City Area Yurt and Trail System, USFS Forest Road, and USGS 7.5 minute topographic, "Lowman".

Global Positioning System Locations

UTM(in NAD 83 Projection):

Banner Ridge Parking Lot: 11T 0611723 4875455

Elkhorn Yurt: 11T0613237 4875409

Lat/Long (in NAD 83 Projection)

Banner Ridge Parking Lot: 44.023/-115.605

Elkhorn Yurt: 44.0231/-115.587

Elevations:

Banner Ridge Parking Lot: 5,783 feet

Elkhorn Yurt: 6,441 feet

WARNING:

Winter travel and use of the yurt can be dangerous. Do not undertake yurt trips without careful preparation and a serious discussion of the dangers with ALL members of your group.

**PLEASE, DO NOT FEED ANY WILD ANIMALS. IT CAN
LEAD TO THE ANIMALS CHEWING OR TEARING THE
YURT SKIN.**